ECS analysis of governors’ 2014 State of the State addresses: Preschool, career and tech ed, higher ed among top priorities

DENVER – An analysis of 2014 State of the State addresses shows education continues to be a top priority with the nation’s governors, with proposals ranging from expanding preschool to restoring K-12 funding to freezing tuition rates.

The review of the annual addresses from 42 governors and the mayor of the District of Columbia reveals an emphasis on early learning, with at least 14 governors and D.C.’s mayor highlighting preschool proposals focused primarily on expanding access through increased funding, universal pre-K and public-private partnerships.

Examples include Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon’s proposal to triple preschool funding and Indiana Gov. Mike Pence’s call for voluntary pre-K vouchers for low-income families.

But the state-of-the-state speeches also show an attention to higher education, with governors in at least 17 states describing postsecondary proposals largely focused on affordability and financial aid. At least five governors called for a freeze on tuition rates.

Examples include Florida Gov. Rick Scott’s call for performance funding, with $80 million targeted for those colleges and universities graduating students best positioned to get a job.

Among other highlights of the analysis:

- **Career and technical education** – At least 13 governors and the D.C. mayor outlined proposals improving or expanding CTE options for students. Examples include Delaware Gov. Jack Markell’s proposal for a two-year program in manufacturing technologies for high school juniors and seniors focused on mechanical, electrical and computer engineering. In Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker wants to help high school students get training in high-demand jobs through dual enrollment programs with technical colleges.

- **Economic and workforce development** – At least 13 governors described plans to create or strengthen partnerships between their education systems and business communities. Examples include New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan’s proposed new effort to partner manufacturing companies with local schools to build relationships leading to a stronger workforce pipeline.

- **K-12 finance** – At least a dozen governors and the D.C. mayor have made the restoration of K-12 funding a priority, following cuts made in the economic recession. Examples include South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley’s proposal for an additional $100 million, targeted for low-income students, and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee’s proposal for an additional $200 million for school districts.

- **Teacher compensation** – Governors in at least 10 states included teacher compensation policy in their addresses, with calls for pay increases or compensation policy changes. Examples include New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez’s proposal to raise minimum starting teachers’ salaries by 10 percent and West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin’s call for a 2 percent across-the-board raise for teachers and support staff.

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